

REMARKS

1. Rejections

Claims 1, 4, 5, and 12-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as allegedly rendered obvious by U.S. Patent No. 3,589,757 to Mooney in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,185,936 to Takahashi. Moreover, claims 2 and 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as allegedly rendered obvious by Mooney in view of Takahashi and U.S. Patent No. 5,503,357 to Johnson et al. ("Johnson"). Applicants respectfully traverse.

2. 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 1, 4, 5, and 12-16 stand rejected as allegedly rendered obvious by Mooney in view of Takahashi, and claims 2 and 11 stand rejected as allegedly rendered obvious by Mooney in view of Takahashi and Johnson. Applicants respectfully traverse.

Specifically, Applicants have amended original claim 1 to incorporate the limitations of original claims 5 and 6. Applicants maintain that none of Mooney, Takahashi, and Johnson disclose or suggest the limitations of original claim 6. Moreover, the Examiner indicates that claim 6 would be allowable if rewritten in independent format, including the limitations of its base claim 1 and intervening claim 5. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the obviousness rejection of claim 1.

Claims 2, 4, 11, 12, and 14-16 depend from amended claim 1. "If an independent claim is non-obvious under 35 U.S.C. 103, then any claim depending therefrom is nonobvious." MPEP 2143.03 (citations omitted). Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the various obviousness rejection of claims 2, 4, 11, 12, and 14-16.

CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully submit that this application, as amended, is in condition for allowance, and such disposition is earnestly solicited. If the Examiner believes that an interview with Applicants' representatives, either in person or by telephone, would expedite the prosecution of this application, we would welcome such an opportunity. Applicants believe that no fees are due as a result of this responsive amendment. Nevertheless, in the event of any variance between the fees determined by Applicants and those determined by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, please charge any such variance to the undersigned's Deposit Account No. 02-0375.

Respectfully submitted,

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